

If you want the trade commissioner to assist you in linking up potential customers, agents or distributors, you should send a dozen sets of your literature with prices to allow them to canvass the trade effectively. Phone calls sometimes work, but the prospective French client prefers to have documentation in hand before agreeing to a meeting. Such literature should be sent to the trade commissioner as far in advance as possible (at least two months prior to your trip). For your visit bring:

- catalogues and price lists (French francs and dollars, both f.o.b. and c.i.f.);
- technical specifications;
- references;
- samples (if appropriate);
- business cards (lots of them and in French, if possible); and
- your firm's stationery and letterhead.

Representation. Representatives, distributors and agents in France are often wary and misinformed about Canadian suppliers. The North American habit of imposing large quotas for first year sales, as well as 30-day payment terms, tend to get short shrift. The French custom is to test the market slowly and to pay even more slowly — 90 to 120 days is not uncommon.

There are intricate laws governing the legal relationships between principals and representatives, salespersons and agents, and rescinding an agreement is complex and costly. Before appointing a representative or a commercial agent, check with a French lawyer or ask the trade commissioner for some advice. One suggestion is to agree to a one-year trial period.

Follow-up. Upon returning to Canada, you should send a thank you letter to all the people you met on business; confirm any arrangements agreed upon or discussed at meetings (the French are more sensitive than most Europeans about lack of follow-up); and send copies of relevant correspondence (agency agreements, problems which could be solved by a local call) to the trade commissioner.

Miscellaneous. The Royal Bank of Canada, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the National Bank of Canada, the Bank of Montreal and the Bank of Nova Scotia have resident representatives.